



# Turning Points in History

## Unit Summary

World War II, the fall of the Soviet Union, and 9/11 are all important turning points in the development of the world in which we live. *What led to these pivotal moments in history?* In this unit, students evaluate what they believe are the three most important turning points in European history from 1500–1939. Support for students' judgments come from their research. Students use the *Showing Evidence Tool* to organize three claims and the evidence to support them, and participate in a mock trial to determine the most important turning point in European history.

## Curriculum-Framing Questions

- **Essential Question**  
How did we get here from there?
- **Unit Questions**  
How can we determine the most important turning points in the history of modern Europe?  
What do you think are the three most important turning points in European history?
- **Content Questions**  
What types of events can be turning points?  
What are some of the important time periods in European history?

## Assessment Processes

View how a variety of student-centered [assessments](#) are used in the Turning Points in History Unit Plan. These assessments help students and teachers set goals; monitor student progress; provide feedback; assess thinking, processes, performances, and products; and reflect on learning throughout the learning cycle.

## Instructional Procedures

### Introduce the Unit

*NOTE: This unit can be implemented as a culminating activity after studying key periods in European history.*

Before the unit begins, provide each student with a journal to use throughout the learning cycle to record thoughts and responses to questions.

Write on the board the Essential Question, *How did we get here from there?* To help students make a personal connection, first ask them to reflect on the question and how it relates to their lives. Ask students, *What events have led them to where they are today?* Allow students time to respond in their journals and then ask volunteers to share and discuss their responses. Next, pose the question again and ask students to now answer the question in relation to the study of history. Guide students to think about the cause-and-effect nature of historical events, and give examples of how the outcomes of some events can dramatically change the course of history (for example, Pearl Harbor, Hitler attacking Russia in violation of the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, and so forth). Use a graphic organizer, such as a flowchart, to offer a visual representation of these examples.

Describe or review (depending on when in the unit is implemented) some of the key periods in European history from 1500–1939, such as the Reformation, Enlightenment, and Industrial Revolution periods. Make sure to distinguish the

### At a Glance

**Grade Level:** 9-12

**Subject:** Social Studies

**Topics:** European History

**Higher-Order Thinking**

**Skills:** Argumentation,  
Investigation, Evaluation

**Key Learnings:** Turning  
Points, Argumentation Skills,  
Persuasive Speaking, Historical  
Research

**Time Needed:** 8-10 hours

**Background:** Texas, United  
States

### Things You Need

[Assessment](#)  
[Standards](#)  
[Resources](#)

differences between a specific event (Waterloo) and the more general concept of a period (Renaissance). Lead a discussion about some of the important time periods in European history. Begin to define the idea of turning points in history, and ask students to brainstorm the types of events they think can be turning points. [The National History Day Web site](#)\* states that a turning point can be:

- A personal decision in the life of one person
- A political choice affecting millions
- An event or idea with global or local consequences
- The life of a single person who inspires or affects other people

Pose the Unit Question, *How can we determine the most important turning points in the history of modern Europe?* Have students propose some pivotal events in European history using the [planning guide](#). Encourage students to share their thoughts as you record their responses on the board. Make sure students think critically about the impact of the events they choose and what factors contributed to the development of the events. Students should present a description of the events, but also draw conclusions about how the events affected individuals, communities, nations, or the world. Point out that each event listed is a starting point in answering the Essential Question, and often the paths “from there to here” include many complex events and issues. Allow time for students to record their thoughts in their journals.

### Practice Using the Tool

Introduce students to the *Showing Evidence Tool* by exploring the [Try the Tool](#) demonstration space together. Discuss the sample case together or create a sample project and show students how to add, describe, and rate evidence and claims. Model how student teams will peer review each other’s work. Also, show the Comments feature, and agree on how it will be used. This feature can provide valuable insight into students’ thinking.

Hold a discussion around the idea of reliable evidence. Have students ask themselves the following questions when rating the reliability of an evidence source:

- *Is the source biased?*
- *Is the information current?*
- *Is the author an authority on the subject?*
- *Is the author expressing fact or opinion?*

### Use the Tool

Before proceeding with the next activity, click [here](#) to set up the Turning Points in History project in your workspace. Have students log into their *Showing Evidence* team spaces. Assign students to work with a partner. Instruct students to choose three separate events that they think are the most important turning points in European history. Each event becomes a claim in the *Showing Evidence* workspace. Outline parameters for the amount of evidence needed for each claim. For example, students must find at least five pieces of evidence that support the claim and three pieces of evidence that weaken the claim. Remind students that evidence must be researched from reliable sources and must not be based on the students’ opinions. Distribute the [argumentation rubric](#) and explain to students that they should use the rubric as a guide while they work with *Showing Evidence*. As teams work, use the [evaluative checklist](#) to observe and assess the evaluative thinking of students.

After students complete the initial research stage, use the teacher workspace in *Showing Evidence* to assign each pair of students a peer team to review. Have student pairs use the [peer review checklist](#) to read and evaluate the claims of the team assigned to them and make constructive comments and corrections where needed to the claims and evidence. Students can comment on the work by requesting clarification of evidence, pointing out where claims are unclear, indicating where facts or assumptions are questionable, and correcting distortions of opposing points of view again using the [argumentation rubric](#) as a guide.

Use the Comments feature to give feedback, redirect effort, suggest new avenues of study, or ask for clarification about a team’s thinking. When the review process is complete, give the students time to make adjustments and corrections based on the comments of their peer review team.

### Examine the Showing Evidence Activity

The *Showing Evidence Tool* space below represents one team’s investigation in this project. You can double-click on the evidence to read the team’s descriptions.

**Project Name:** **Turning Points in History** ([Click here to set up this project in your workspace](#))

**Prompt:** **What are the three most important turning points in European History?**

**VIEW-ONLY MODE** As a viewer, you can view but cannot edit this project.

Claim	Support	Quality	Evidence
<p><b>YOUR CLAIM</b></p> <p>Martin Luther's posting of the 95 Theses.</p> <p><b>Your Explanation</b></p> <p>This revolutionized the Catholic Church and religion as it was generally accepted at the time, as well as evoking one of the most significant religious movements in history.</p> <p><b>Your Rating</b></p> <p>★★★★☆</p> <p>We gave this event 4 stars because it had a huge impact on Christianity in the past as well as in the future.</p>	<p>★★★★+</p> <p>★★★★+</p> <p>★★★★+</p> <p>★★★★+</p> <p>★★★★+</p>	<p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p>	<p>Criticized the Church's powers.</p> <p>Helped to extend the Renaissance and</p> <p>Martin Luther presented a new definition of faith.</p> <p>Influenced the course of religion today.</p> <p>Gave smaller religious sects greater power</p>
<p><b>YOUR CLAIM</b></p> <p>The Scientific Revolution</p> <p><b>Your Explanation</b></p> <p>When the Scientific Revolution swept across Europe, it brought about revolutionary ideas and inventions which completely changed life.</p>	<p>★★★★+</p> <p>★★★★+</p> <p>★★★</p> <p>★★★★+</p>	<p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p> <p>★★★★</p>	<p>Mathematical studies helped people</p> <p>Current concepts of religion were</p> <p>Future advancements.</p> <p>Publication of the Encyclopedia.</p> <p>Gave way to modern</p>

**EVIDENCE BIN**

- ★★★★ Gave smaller religious sects greater power
- ★★★★ Luther's postings only publicized ideas already
- ★★★★ The assassination and war solved little, but
- ★★★★ Tension between Serbia and Austria would have
- ★★★★ Science held little effect on the general public.
- ★★★★ Many advancements would have occurred,
- ★★★★ Gave way to modern science.

### Revisit Student Claims

Bring the class back together and make a list on the board of all of the claims made by the student teams. Have each team give a short [multimedia presentation](#) detailing their claims. After the presentations, guide students through the process of determining which of the claims are the most important. Have the class reach consensus before a claim's position on the list can be finalized. (Alternately, this activity could be conducted using the [Visual Ranking Tool](#).)

Announce that a mock trial will be conducted between the two claims that the class consensus judged to be the most important. Assign students to courtroom roles, such as lawyers on the legal team representing each claim, expert witnesses, and jury members. Use the [Mock Trial Guide\\*](#) (PDF; 52 pages) to support the implementation of the trial. Share the [mock trial rubric](#) with students, so they are aware of the expectations for this performance assessment. Act as judge and manage the trial, ruling on objections raised by the legal teams and deciding if evidence is of high enough quality to be submitted to the "court."

After the conclusion of the mock trial, ask each student to fill out a [self reflection](#). The reflections give students an opportunity to reflect on their individual performances as well as the performance of their team as they prepared for and participated in the mock trial.

### Reflect on the Unit

Revisit the Essential Question, *How did we get here from there?* Allow students time to reflect individually in their journals. Then, in small groups, have students discuss the question in relation to what they have learned with their research and mock trial. Bring the discussion back to the whole class and give students an opportunity to share what they talked about in their small groups.

### Prerequisite Skills

- Basic knowledge of the sequence of important events in European history
- Good research skills (for the library and Internet)

### Differentiated Instruction

#### Resource Student

- Provide the student with extra study time, reduced number of required claims, reduced amount of required evidence, preselected research materials, adaptive technologies, and support from resource specialists
- Modify the student's learning objectives to dictate the level of depth and complexity required in final products
- Assign the student to a modified role during the mock trial

**Gifted Student**

- During the mock trial, assign the student the role of "expert witness," in which the student assumes the persona of a participant in the key turning point
- Give the student opportunities to explore key events that are of interest to the student and to craft evidence in new and original ways

**English Language Learner**

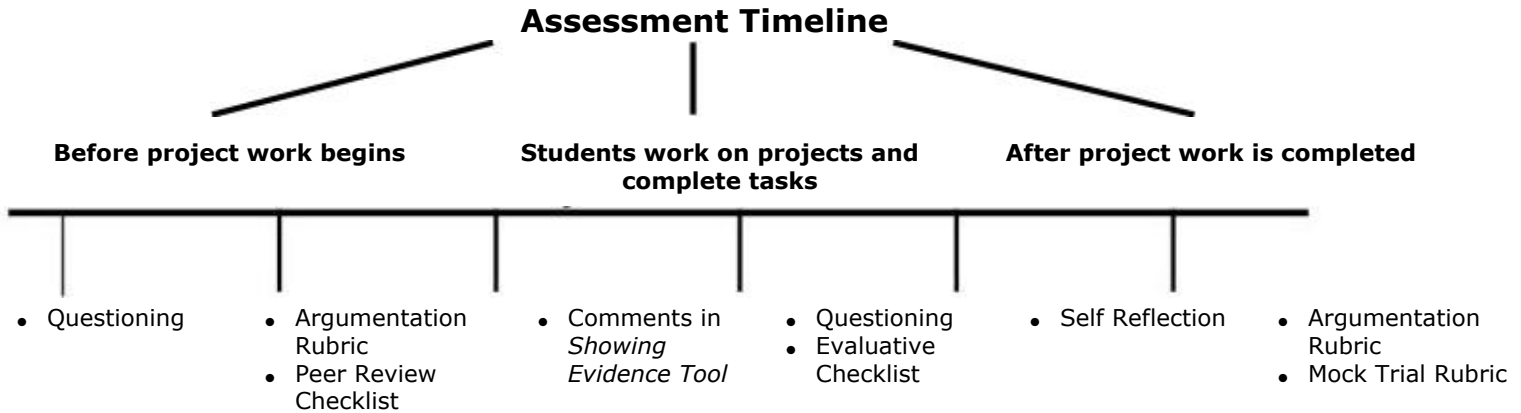
- Group the student with other bilingual students and allow them to work with English language instruction specialists
- Have research conducted on the Web translated by a variety of Web sites
- During the mock trial, allow the student to provide research support to a legal team if the student is uncomfortable with a speaking role

**Credits**

Robert McCraw teaches European History and World History in McKinney, Texas. He participated in the Intel® Teach Program, which resulted in this idea for a classroom project. A team of teachers expanded the plan into the example you see here.

# Showing Evidence Tool: Turning Points in History Assessment Plan

## Assessment Plan



Questioning is used throughout the unit to assess prior knowledge as well as prompt student thinking. Student thinking is also assessed through the quality and complexity of claims, evidence, ratings, and peer-to-peer comments within *Showing Evidence*. Use the [argumentation rubric](#) to assess student performance. This assessment can be completed at the end of the *Showing Evidence Tool* phase and at the end of the multimedia presentation. The [peer review checklist](#) offers students an opportunity to provide feedback on one another's work as well as self-assess their own understanding. Assess student collaboration, research, and higher-order thinking with the [evaluative checklist](#). The checklist can be used during or after all collaborative work sessions.

During the mock trial phase of the unit, assess students as they prepare evidence, construct characters to use as primary source "expert witnesses," deliver arguments, deliver rebuttals, and conduct cross-examinations. Offer objections as well as make evaluative judgments to decide the final outcome of the trial. The students conduct [self reflections](#) and critiques of their performances during the trial.

Use a [mock trial rubric](#) to assess the quality of the learning outcomes of the mock trial. This is the summative assessment to be completed at the end of the unit.

Students keep reflections on their experiences and critiques of their performance in a journal. Student journals can be an ongoing assignment for the length of the unit or can be implemented only during the mock trial.

# Showing Evidence Tool: Turning Points in History

## Content Standards and Objectives

### Targeted Content Standards and Benchmarks

#### Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)

10th Grade Social Studies

1A: The student understands traditional historical points of reference in world history. The student is expected to identify the major eras in world history and describe their defining characteristics.

2A: The student understands how the present relates to the past. The student is expected to identify elements in a contemporary situation that parallel a historical situation.

2B: The student describes variables in a contemporary situation that could result in different outcomes.

5A: The student understands causes and effects of European expansion beginning in the 16th century. The student is expected to identify causes of European expansion beginning in the 16th century.

15A: The student understands the historical antecedents of contemporary political systems. The student is expected to explain the impact of parliamentary and constitutional systems of government on significant world political developments.

### Student Objectives

#### Students will be able to:

- Evaluate trends in European history from 1500-1939 and identify key turning points
- Evaluate evidence to support claims that one turning point is more important than any other
- Conduct research using library reference resources and the Internet
- Assume various courtroom roles and conduct a mock trial using argumentation and logic skills to debate the merits of two different claims
- Collaborate with classmates to rank the importance of various European history turning points
- Review the work of their peers for the purposes of editing and constructive criticism

# Showing Evidence Tool: Turning Points in History

## Resources

### Materials and Resources

#### Printed Materials

- History textbooks
- Variety of library research materials including books, periodicals, and reference materials

#### Internet Resources

- Best of History Web Sites  
[www.besthistorysites.net/index.shtml](http://www.besthistorysites.net/index.shtml)\*  
A gateway to hundreds of high-quality, star-rated history Web sites
- National History Day  
[www.nationalhistoryday.org](http://www.nationalhistoryday.org)\*  
Collection of resources focused on the theme of "Turning Points in History"

#### Technology – Hardware

- Computer with Internet to access the *Showing Evidence Tool*
- Projection system to show students how to use the *Showing Evidence Tool*

#### Technology – Software

- Multimedia software to create presentation of claims

## Argumentation Rubric

	4	3	2	1
<b>Claim</b>	Claim is clearly stated, focused on the topic, and explained. Rating of the claim reflects a realistic understanding of the process.	Claim is clearly stated, focused on the topic, and explained. Rating of the claim reflects a moderately realistic understanding of the process.	Claim is stated, focused on the topic, and explained. Explanation might not show a full understanding of the topic/claim complexity, and claim rating might indicate a minimally realistic understanding of the process.	Claim is not clearly stated or is unfocused on the topic. Explanation might be missing or lacking understanding of the topic. Claim rating may be incomplete or unrealistic.
<b>Evidence</b>	Project presents a clear and accurate treatment of all available evidence that addresses the central point of the claim. All evidence is properly documented and evaluated.	Project presents all relevant evidence needed to support the claim with no major errors. Most evidence is properly documented, and all is properly evaluated.	Project provides evidence for the claim, but may not address all necessary aspects. Most evidence is properly documented and evaluated.	Project fails to provide convincing evidence for the claim. Student shows a lack of understanding of proper documentation and evaluation.
<b>Analysis of Evidence</b>	Student shows an understanding of the complexity of the evidence in relation to the claim. Rationale of support/nonsupport reflects an understanding of multiple factors and perspectives.	Student shows a clear understanding of evidence in relation to the claim. Rationale of support/nonsupport reflects partial understanding of multiple factors and perspectives.	Student shows a basic understanding of evidence in relation to the claim. Rationale of support/nonsupport may not reflect depth of understanding.	Student's understanding of evidence/claim relationship is weak or inconsistent. Rationale does not support rating.
<b>Conclusion</b>	Conclusion reflects an understanding of the depth and/or complexity of the topic based on evidence gathered. Possible counterarguments are thoroughly addressed. Conclusion is clearly related to the claim and thoroughly described.	Conclusion reflects an understanding of topic based on evidence gathered. Possible counterarguments are explained with little detail. Conclusion is clearly related to the claim.	Conclusion reflects an understanding of the topic based on evidence gathered. Possible counterarguments are only mentioned. Conclusion is not clearly related to the claim.	Conclusion is not related to the claim or does not show relationship between the claim and evidence. Possible counterarguments are not addressed.



## Peer Review Checklist

Read and evaluate the claim of the group assigned to you. Make constructive comments and corrections where needed. Check off each item below only if the statement is true. If the claim is not true, use the space provided to offer suggestions to help improve the argument. Use the argumentation rubric as a guide.

Group: \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed by: \_\_\_\_\_

Claim: \_\_\_\_\_

- Claim is clearly stated.  
If not, how can the claim be improved?

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- All evidence is clearly explained.  
If not, what evidence needs to be clarified?

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- All facts and assumptions are credible and believable.  
If not, explain the questionable facts or assumptions.

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- All opposing points of view are accurate.  
If not, explain the distorted points of view.

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## Evaluation Checklist

Use this checklist to observe and assess evaluative thinking.

### Determining the Credibility of Sources

- Infers assumptions supporting information when determining the credibility of a source
- Detects bias
- Determines the expertise of the author
- Determines the credibility of qualitative and quantitative evidence

### Responding to Persuasive Arguments

- Looks for sound reasoning in persuasive arguments
- Detects false dilemmas in arguments—reducing complex issues with multiple options to either-or issues
- Detects begging the question in arguments—using a claim itself as evidence for the validity of the claim
- Detects poisoning the well in arguments—discounting any evidence that conflicts with their views
- Detects evading the issue in arguments—changing the subject to one that is less difficult to deal with
- Detects appeals to authority in arguments—claiming validity by referring to an authority's position
- Detects arguing from ignorance in arguments—arguing that since a claim cannot be proven to be false, it must be true
- Detects straw man in arguments—portraying an opposing point of view inaccurately

### Forming Opinions

- Uses a thorough and sophisticated analysis of different kinds of information from a wide variety of sources to form opinions

### Communicating Opinions

- Explains opinion with sincere belief and commitment
- Presents various conflicting viewpoints and explains the benefits and drawbacks of each
- Conveys the complexity of the issue by describing the interaction of a variety of factors

## Mock Trial Student Reflection

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Team \_\_\_\_\_

Team Position \_\_\_\_\_

### **Individual:**

Explain your role in the trial. How did you prepare for your role? How did you participate in the trial?

How did you show you had a clear understanding of your responsibilities and prepare adequately for them?

What would you do differently next time?

### **Team:**

Was the team ready for trial? Were all team members prepared for their role and was evidence gathered? Explain.

How was the team able to mediate conflict, compromise, and work together to accomplish the common goal?

What do you believe was your team's strength?

In what areas do you believe your team could improve?

### Mock Trial Rubric

	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Preparation and Research</b>	<p>Witness statements are fully developed, completely consistent with historical record, and accurately portrayed.</p> <p>Attorney questions are relevant, logical, and clear; questions are properly formed and delivered.</p> <p>Statements and questions show sophisticated understanding of how evidence relates to and supports or opposes the claim.</p>	<p>Witness statements are adequately developed, fairly consistent, and accurately performed.</p> <p>Attorney questions are clear, logical, and relevant most of the time; most questions are properly formed.</p> <p>Statements and questions show an understanding of how evidence supports or opposes the claim.</p>	<p>Witness statements, questions, and/or performances show a lack of preparation.</p> <p>Attorney questions lack logic; most questions are poorly formed.</p> <p>Statements and questions show some understanding of how evidence supports or opposes the claim.</p>	<p>Witness statements are not developed, and presentation shows little or no preparation</p> <p>Attorney questions are irrelevant or unclear.</p> <p>Statements and questions are inconsistent with evidence supporting or opposing the claim.</p>
<b>Voice</b>	<p>Presenter is easily understood and consistently uses an appropriate rate, volume, and intonation.</p>	<p>Presenter is understood most of the time and uses an appropriate rate, volume, and intonation most of the time.</p>	<p>Presenter is understood, but uses an inappropriate rate, volume, or intonation that distracts from what is being said.</p>	<p>Presenter is not easily understood; delivery needs work.</p>
<b>Authenticity</b>	<p>Presenter is very convincing and has excellent use of body and facial expression; words and gestures match. Their dress adds to the performance, and their portrayal is well adapted to the setting.</p>	<p>Presenter is believable. They use adequate body and facial expression, and their portrayal is adapted to the setting.</p>	<p>Presenter lacks realism. Their body and facial expressions do not match their portrayal.</p>	<p>Presenter needs to be more convincing. Body and facial expressions are not used.</p>
<b>Courtroom Decorum</b>	<p>Presenter has appropriate interactions with judge and attorneys, and the presenter stays in character throughout the trial.</p>	<p>Presenter's interactions with other members of the trial are appropriate most of the time, and the presenter stays in character most of the time.</p>	<p>Presenter is unsure of how to interact with other members of the trial and has difficulty staying in character.</p>	<p>Presenter is distracted, demonstrates inappropriate behavior, and does not stay in character.</p>



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Period \_\_\_\_\_

Course \_\_\_\_\_

# How did we get here from there?

World War II, the fall of the Soviet Union, and 9/11 are some of the key turning points that shaped the development of the 21st century world in which we live today. If this is the case, then what was the critical turning point that led to WWII?

In other words, how did Europe go from Renaissance to Holocaust in a little over 400 years?

In this unit, you will decide for yourself what were the turning points in history that shaped the Europe we know today.

- First you will use the online *Showing Evidence Tool* to create three “claims” or arguments for events you have selected to be the most important in the development of Europe. There is no right answer here. It is up to you to back up what you say with evidence.
- Next, evidence. You’ll need it. What you are looking for if factual proof that what you are saying is important to the development of Europe (political, economic, religious, social, intellectual, artistic) is actually important?
- Rate it. A big part of what you are doing in this phase of the project is going to be using the *Showing Evidence Tool* ratings to judge the quality of the evidence you find so that you can narrow it down to the most compelling justification for your claim.

Use the chart below to help you brainstorm different turning points in European history you think might be the most important.

Next, choose three events that you’d be interested in investigating and enter them into the next row of boxes. Below that, give a justification for why you chose these to be the most important.


# Turning Points in European History

By Teresa and Anthony  
Period 5

# Three most important events...

- Martin Luther's posting of the 95 Theses
- Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary
- The Scientific Revolution

# Martin Luther's posting of the 95 Theses

- Criticized the Church's Power
- Helped extend the Renaissance and influence of classical views and independent thoughts
- Presented a new definition of faith
- Influenced the course of religion today
- Provided smaller religious sects greater power and prominence



# Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

- Sparked World War I
- Brought about World War II
- WWI lead to the Russian Revolution, and later, the Cold War
- Led Serbia and Austria to reach compromise

# The Scientific Revolution

- Helped people comprehend how the world worked
- Allowed for current concepts of religion to be questioned
- Lead to technological developments
- Brought about the publication of the Encyclopedia
- Set the stage for modern science

# Conclusion

- Martin Luther's 95 Theses, the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and the Scientific Revolution were all milestones for European history. Together, they formed complex religion, stable time periods, improved technologies, and improved Europe as a whole.